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# amnesty international philippines

## EAST TIMOR: 19 YEARS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The Amnesty International Philippine Section has monitored and views with deep concern the turn of events with regards to the Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor. It is unfortunate that there are attempts to ignore the real and very serious human rights situation in East Timor. It is alarming to note the attempt to deny the universality of human rights and take for granted the responsibility of every state to ensure that international human rights norms and standards are respected everywhere regardless of geographical, cultural, religious and political boundaries.

Amnesty International has consistently viewed the East Timor issue in conjunction with the position of the United Nations which has not recognized Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. It is clear that East Timor is occupied by Indonesian forces and that it is not a province of Indonesia. More importantly, the terrible human rights situation in East Timor since the occupation of 1975 has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community by AI and other international organizations. These appalling facts are extremely crucial in the continuing political debate:

- In the first few years of the invasion of East Timor, as many as 200,000 of a population of about 600,000 East Timorese have died, thousands of whom were extrajudicially executed,
- Hundreds of other East Timorese have "disappeared" and remain unaccounted for,
- Scores of suspected opponents of Indonesia rule in East Timor were sentenced to lengthy prison terms for subversion and other political offences in the mid-1980s,
- Interrogation of suspected opponents often included torture and ill-treatment,
- At least 100 people were killed and many more wounded in the Santa Cruz massacre of 12 November 1991 when Indonesian forces opened fire on a peaceful procession, and
- 20 East Timorese remain prisoners of conscience and another 11 pro-independence activists who are in danger of ill-treatment and torture were detained in May 1994.

These facts speak for themselves. Amnesty International maintains that the overall human rights situation in East Timor is still very bad.

Amnesty International Philippine Section urges the Philippine Government and other ASEAN governments to reaffirm their commitment to the universality of human rights. The Philippines most especially must remain at the forefront of human rights promotion in the Southeast Asian region rather than succumb to pressures from its neighbors who have chosen to flagrantly disregard the human dignity of its citizens. It must aim to promote human rights locally, wihin the Asian region and across the globe. It must work for HUMAN RIGHTS NOW!

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